worldviews. It is, at the very least, a strategic error to assume away differences in religious belief or to minimize their importance at the international level. Wuthnow's appreciation of religion as culture and deep respect for believers and their quest for religious truth presents an important model for how we can think about the challenges of religious diversity at home and abroad.

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Islam: A Mosaic, Not a Monolith. By Vartan Gregorian. Brookings Institution Press, 2003. 164 pages. $15.95.

Not only is a little knowledge dangerous, but ignorance of a world religion like Islam can also prove damaging to the United States' national interests and harmful to global co-existence in the long term. So believes Vartan Gregorian, president of the Carnegie Corporation, whose reflections on this topic are primarily addressed to a Western policy community. Although most books about Islam these days range from screeds, impenetrable tomes to recycled redundancies, it is a relief to find a book with a commendable purpose. Although scholars might disagree with some aspects of the author's narrative or with his presentation of the information, Gregorian thankfully refrains from *ad hominem* commentary as many people in authority think they are entitled or required to make. For this reviewer at least, it was an opportunity to learn how people within policy and philanthropic communities frame the problems and issues about Islam and religion generally.

This book is a longer meditation of a post-September 11, 2001 report Gregorian wrote to the trustees of the Carnegie Corporation. Born in Tabriz in Iran and educated in the United States as a historian of Afghanistan, Gregorian has held prestigious positions in American academic life, from being the founding dean

and provost of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the University of Pennsylvania, then becoming president of Brown University followed by the presidency of the New York Public Library. His interest in the world of Islam predates America's most recent but painful tryst with things Islamic. On assuming the leadership of the Carnegie Corporation in 1997, Gregorian publicly complained about the lack of knowledge about Islam in American public life. By 2005 the Corporation dedicated its prestigious Carnegie Scholars Program to broadening and stimulating research on Islam in the United States and abroad. For the purposes of full disclosure, this reviewer was among sixteen recipients of this competitive award, and the Program is expected to continue for at least three years.

In six chapters Gregorian does several things. He undertakes a survey of Islam for the uninitiated and then explores the tensions between traditionalists and modernists and the challenges of the twentieth century, from the politics of liberation prevalent in Muslim societies to debates over the meaning of democracy and modernity. He concludes with a plea for mutual understanding between mainly Euro-American society and the Muslim world.

As the youngest of the three religions that trace their roots to Abraham, Islamdom also has the freshest memory of the dismemberment of its political unity by a concatenation of internal weaknesses and the designs of foreign powers. These events also set into motion significant waves of cultural and technological transitions in Muslim societies. It is in this context that Gregorian explores the kinds of challenges that modernization poses to Muslim societies. Citing Toynbee, Gregorian endorses the belief that "civilizations rise when people make creative responses to a variety of challenges—geographic, economic, political, and spiritual—and their continuing creativity sustains their civilizations" (40).

But the thrust of Gregorian's narrative is more interesting than the details he marshals to make his case. In a message directed at decision-makers in different spheres of US society, he relentlessly tries to reassure us that, as a religion, Islam is not a threat as many fear. Even when one finds ideological groups cemented by Islam, there remain so many complex and natural fragments, divisions, and disagreements to offset purported threats of a monolithic Islam, that such claims sound bizarre, if not intellectually unsound. Exploring three episodes in recent history of alleged Islamic threats from the "Islamic bomb" of Pakistan, the Islamic revolution in Iran, and the war of liberation in Afghanistan against the Soviets, Gregorian concludes that the "internal tensions and geopolitical interests of Muslim nations defied external efforts to impose any scheme of unity" (68).

All societies, Gregorian believes, including Muslim ones, need to address the tough questions that will calibrate the proper dosages of several factors and ratios: economic justice and freedom, individual rights and collective rights, and the interplay between religion, modernity, tradition, and the secular. It is time, he says, quoting the Sufi Jaluluddin Rumi, to "start a huge foolish project, like Noah" (100). Here he rehearses an array of moral and ethical issues that receive sensational media coverage from suicide bombings to honor killings and the treatment of women to questions of apostasy.

Gregorian is not reluctant to take on some of the icons of American public opinion like the writer George Will and political scientist Samuel Huntington

for their faulty wisdom presented as fact. As an advocate of American exceptionalism, Will is dead wrong, says Gregorian, to claim that if America decides something is so to speak "history," then it means it is irrelevant. There is a larger world out there to consider whether one likes it or not. In a globalizing world we would be chastened to remember that any venture these days cannot only reflect the dreams of Washington, London, and Paris, but it will have to seriously include the dreams of Abuja, Caracas, Beijing, Jakarta, and Delhi. Rebutting Huntington's claim that Asian and Islamic countries will align themselves against the West, Gregorian believes that a monolithic Muslim world was "extremely rare" and that powerful divisions within Muslim societies are "conveniently ignored by purveyors of the concept of a conflict among civilizations because these divisions blur or complicate the neat theories that create powerful myths about powerful enemies" (111–12). Both heartening and commendable in Gregorian's brief reflection is his attempt to "decategorize" Muslims as a monolith and conceive of them in all their complexity without making his subject into an exotic specie. He succeeds in doing what the new turn in anthropology has taught for several decades now: not to reduce complex phenomena like religion and its adherents to a category. The people about whom Gregorian writes are flesh and blood human beings unlike the way they are portrayed in op-ed columns and editorials of prominent and not so prominent daily papers and talk shows.

If the manuscript of this book only enjoyed a few hours at the desk of an Islamic studies specialist, the author might have avoided repeating the errors of his sources. For instance, he cites the journalist Amir Taheri in passages highlighted in the book for emphasis. The term *estesh'had* he states means "affidavit" to convey the idea of [sic] "martyrlike." It is no secret that *istishhād* in this context means "to seek martyrdom." It is egregious for Taheri to claim that suicide bombers do not use the term *shahīd* for martyr. Proponents of this method of warfare proudly, if not controversially, use this term. To make a boldface claim based on either Taheri's flawed information or Gregorian's own insight that "in Islamic history only a dozen or so Muslims have been considered *shahīd* for having fallen in battle while defending the faith" are examples of lapses that editors are paid to detect.

My quibbles should not detract from the purpose of this meditation: it is an effort by a prominent American to coax decision-makers to take the complexity of religion seriously and a plea to avoid making flawed geopolitical analyses about Islam. Such an effort begins with reliable and sound information about Muslims and Muslim societies. Gregorian believes that the Muslim community in America is in a unique position to advance debates about Islam to the broader citizenry. Today, America is undoubtedly equipped with the best resources in the West to study Islam in terms of the range of scholarship, universities, and research cohorts it can boast, even though more is always welcome. And yet ironically, its public discourses and public policy communities—let alone government—display the most anemic symptoms when it comes to knowledge about Islam and Muslim societies.

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